(III) a neutralizing agent comprising an hydroxide of a monovalent cation in an amount such that the ratio of moles of monovalent cation to moles of maleic acid plus moles of D,L-tartaric acid minus moles of calcium ranges from about 2.1:1 to 3.8:1;

(b) maintaining said aqueous reaction mixture at a temperature of from about 20° C. to 120° C. for a time period sufficient to form a reaction product mixture of said 1-hydroxy-3-oxa-1,2,4,5-pentane tetracarboxylic acid salts and 3,6-dioxa-1,2,4,5,7,8-octane hexacarboxylic acid salts;

(c) treating the filtrate from step (b) with a carbonate whereby calcium carbonate precipitates;

(d) removing the calcium carbonate from the filtrate and recycling it to step (a) to prepare additional amounts of reaction product and

(e) recovering and purifying the filtrate from step (d).

14. A process of claim **13** further including the step of reacting the calcium carbonate recovered in step (d) with maleic acid prior to recycle to step (a) to form calcium maleate.

15. A process of claim **13** wherein the carbonate is sodium bicarbonate.

16. A process of claim **14** wherein the mole ratio of carbonate to calcium in step (c) is 1.3:1.

17. A process of claim **13** wherein the neutralizing agent is sodium hydroxide.

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